

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION No. 9

February 4, 2013

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The state of Montana is currently in the process of preparing an environmental impact statement on a significant expansion of coal production. By design the analysis now underway should be an objective assessment of the environmental impacts consistent with legal and constitutional protections. This resolution, should it pass, would impose a significant political bias into that analysis. It would cast serious doubt on the State's ability to even conduct a comprehensive and objective analysis.

My morning newspaper is the Great Falls Tribune (Tribune) and the January 15, 2013 edition carried a story under the headline "*Smog chokes cities in China for fourth day.*" The brief story included the line, "*The capital and 32 other cities suffered 'hazardous' air... swelling hospitals with patients reporting respiratory and heart problems.*" (attachment 1) This is not the first time this issue sought the attention of people in responsible positions. A December 4, 2012 edition of the Tribune noted that our planet's worst polluter was China now dumping 10 billion tons of pollution into our shared atmosphere. (attachment 2). If the Tribune is too local to make an impression I also enclose an article that addresses the mathematics of the climate change issue in a broader context titled "*Global Warming's Terrifying New Math*" by Bill McKibben. This article contains the assessment of the planet's most prominent climatologist pointing out we are on a course for "*disaster.*" (attachment 3).

During the last Montana State Legislative Session in 2011, the U.S. Military held a briefing and the public was invited. I attended and the officers making the presentation advised all in attendance that climate change was creating national security concerns. In addition the executive summary of the Quadrennial Defense Review Report – February 2010 included the following: "*Other powerful trends are likely to add complexity to the security environment. Rising demands for resources, ...(and) climate change ... are ...trends whose complex interplay may spark or exacerbate future conflicts.*" It thus becomes painfully obvious that the coal resources of Montana, exported to the planet's number one polluter, are relevant and critical contributors to climate change, human health, and national security issues.

It is probable that China is among the markets for Montana coal and it is then only logical that this coal is the cheapest option China can find to fuel its industrial expansion. Thus, HJR #9 calls for encouraging the low-bid coal seller to basically subsidize a political ideology that remains a threat to our national security. It is in essence subsidizing a foreign industrial expansion that continues to displace American workers and jobs.

I respectfully urge that the Montana State Legislature not become the political cheering squad for -- international capitalist corporations -- who are happy to subsidizing communist China's industrial expansion that places: our planet's atmosphere; American jobs; and our national security at risk. Please vote no on HJR #9.

**Smog chokes cities
in China for fourth day**

BEIJING — For the fourth straight day Monday, health authorities in multiple Chi-

nese cities advised residents to stay indoors, as a blanket of smog continued to choke much of China.

The capital and 32 other cities suffered "hazardous" air this weekend, local media reported, swelling hospitals with patients reporting respiratory and heart problems.

Face masks sold quickly at pharmacies, and some airports and highways suffered delays and closures amid greatly reduced visibility.

— Wire services

Great Falls Tribune 12/4/2012

Carbon pollution on the rise

By Seth Borenstein
AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON — The amount of heat-trapping pollution the world spewed rose again last year by 3 percent. So scientists say it's now unlikely that global warming can be limited to a couple degrees, which is an international goal.

The overwhelming majority of the increase was from China, the world's biggest carbon dioxide polluter. Of the planet's top 10 polluters, the United States and Germany were the only countries that reduced their carbon dioxide emissions.

Last year, all the world's nations combined pumped nearly 38.2 billion tons of carbon dioxide into the air from the burning of fossil fuels such as coal and oil, according to new international calculations on global emissions published Sunday in the journal Nature Climate

BIGGEST POLLUTERS

The 2011 figures for the biggest polluters:

1. China, up 10 percent to 10 billion tons.
2. United States, down 2 percent to 5.9 billion tons
3. India, up 7 percent to 2.5 billion tons.
4. Russia, up 3 percent to 1.8 billion tons.
5. Japan, up 0.4 percent to 1.3 billion tons.
6. Germany, down 4 percent to 0.8 billion tons.
7. Iran, up 2 percent to 0.7 billion tons.
8. South Korea, up 4 percent to 0.6 billion tons.
9. Canada, up 2 percent to 0.6 billion tons.
10. South Africa, up 2 percent to 0.6 billion tons.

Change. That's about a billion tons more than the previous year.

The total amounts to more than 2.4 million pounds of carbon dioxide released into the air every second.

Because emissions of the key greenhouse gas have been rising steadily and most carbon stays in the air for a century, it is not just unlikely but "rather optimistic" to think that the world can limit future temperature increases to 2 degrees,

said the study's lead author, Glen Peters at the Center for International Climate and Environmental Research in Oslo, Norway.

Three years ago, nearly 200 nations set the 2-degree temperature goal in a non-binding agreement. Negotiators now at a conference under way in Doha, Qatar, are trying to find ways to reach that target.

The only way, Peters said, is to start reducing world emissions now and "throw

everything we have at the problem."

Andrew Weaver, a climate scientist at the University of Victoria in Canada who was not part of the study, said: "We are losing control of our ability to get a handle on the global warming problem."

In 1997, most of the world agreed to an international treaty, known as the Kyoto Protocol, that required developed countries such as the United States to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by about 5 percent when compared with the baseline year of 1990. But countries that are still developing, including China and India, were not limited by how much carbon dioxide they expelled. The United States never ratified the treaty.

The latest pollution numbers show that worldwide carbon dioxide levels are 54 percent higher than the 1990 baseline.

Attachment 3

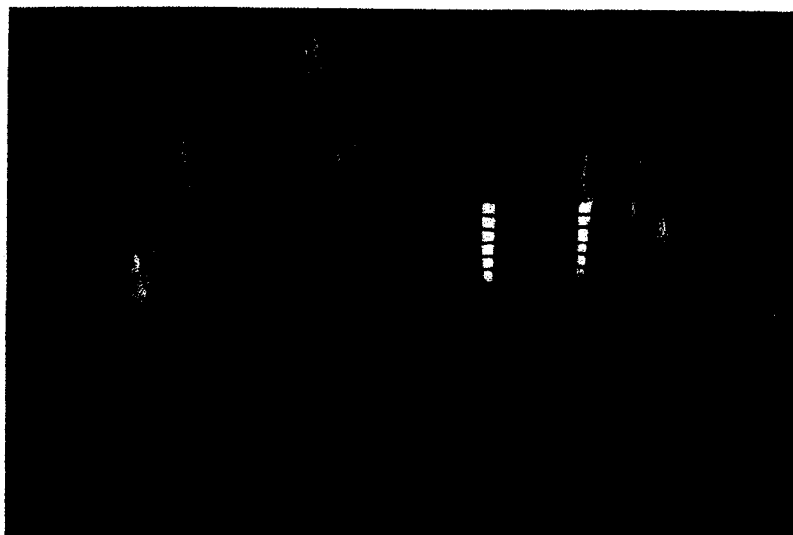


Illustration by Edel Rodriguez

By Bill McKibben

July 19, 2012 9:35 AM ET

If the pictures of those towering wildfires in Colorado haven't convinced you, or the size of your AC bill this summer, here are some hard numbers about climate change: June broke or tied 3,215 high-temperature records across the United States. That followed the warmest May on record for the Northern Hemisphere – the 327th consecutive month in which the temperature of the entire globe exceeded the 20th-century average, the odds of which occurring by simple chance were 3.7×10^{-99} , a number considerably larger than the number of stars in the universe.

Meteorologists reported that this spring was the warmest ever recorded for our nation – in fact, it crushed the old record by so much that it represented the "largest temperature departure from average of any season on record." The same week, Saudi authorities reported that it had rained in Mecca despite a temperature of 109 degrees, the hottest downpour in the planet's history.

Not that our leaders seemed to notice. Last month the world's nations, meeting in Rio for the 20th-anniversary reprise of a massive 1992 environmental summit, accomplished nothing. Unlike George H.W. Bush, who flew in for the first conclave, Barack Obama didn't even attend. It was "a ghost of the glad, confident meeting 20 years ago," the British journalist George Monbiot wrote; no one paid it much attention, footsteps echoing through the halls "once thronged by multitudes." Since I wrote one of the first books for a general audience about global warming way back in 1989, and since I've spent the intervening decades working ineffectively to slow that warming, I can say with some confidence that we're losing the fight, badly and quickly – losing it because, most of all, we remain in denial about the peril that human civilization is in.

When we think about global warming at all, the arguments tend to be ideological, theological and economic. But to grasp the seriousness of our predicament, you just need to do a little math. For the past year, an easy and powerful bit of arithmetical analysis first published by financial analysts in the U.K. has been making the rounds of environmental conferences and journals, but it hasn't yet broken through to the larger public. This analysis upends most of the conventional political thinking about climate change. And it allows us to understand our precarious – our almost-but-not-quite-finally hopeless – position with three simple numbers.

The First Number: 2° Celsius

If the movie had ended in Hollywood fashion, the Copenhagen climate conference in 2009 would have marked the culmination of the global fight to slow a changing climate. The world's nations had gathered in the December gloom of the Danish capital for what a leading climate economist, Sir Nicholas Stern of Britain, called the "most important gathering since the Second World War, given what is at stake." As Danish energy minister Connie Hedegaard, who presided over the conference, declared at the time: "This is our chance. If we miss it, it could take years before we get a new and better one. If ever."

In the event, of course, we missed it. Copenhagen failed spectacularly. Neither China nor the United States, which between them are responsible for 40 percent of global carbon emissions, was prepared to offer dramatic concessions, and so the conference drifted aimlessly for two weeks until world leaders jetted in for the final day. Amid considerable chaos, President Obama took the lead in drafting a face-saving "Copenhagen Accord" that fooled very few. Its purely voluntary agreements committed no one to anything, and even if countries signaled their intentions to cut carbon emissions, there was no enforcement mechanism. "Copenhagen is a crime scene tonight," an angry Greenpeace official declared, "with the guilty men and women fleeing to the airport." Headline writers were equally brutal: COPENHAGEN: THE MUNICH OF OUR TIMES? asked one.

The accord did contain one important number, however. In Paragraph 1, it formally recognized "the scientific view that the increase in global temperature should be below two degrees Celsius." And in the very next paragraph, it declared that "we agree that deep cuts in global emissions are required... so as to hold the increase in global temperature below two degrees Celsius." By insisting on two degrees – about 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit – the accord ratified positions taken earlier in 2009 by the G8, and the so-called Major Economies Forum. It was as conventional as conventional wisdom gets. The number first gained prominence, in fact, at a 1995 climate conference chaired by Angela Merkel, then the German minister of the environment and now the center-right chancellor of the nation.

Some context: So far, we've raised the average temperature of the planet just under 0.8 degrees Celsius, and that has caused far more damage than most scientists expected. (A third of summer sea ice in the Arctic is gone, the oceans are 30 percent more acidic, and since warm air holds more water vapor than cold, the atmosphere over the oceans is a shocking five percent wetter, loading the dice for devastating floods.) Given those impacts, in fact, many scientists have come to think that two degrees is far too lenient a target. "Any number much above one degree involves a gamble," writes Kerry Emanuel of MIT, a leading authority on hurricanes, "and the odds become less and less favorable as the temperature goes up." Thomas Lovejoy, once the World Bank's chief biodiversity adviser, puts it like this: "If we're seeing what we're seeing today at 0.8 degrees Celsius, two degrees is simply too much." NASA scientist James Hansen, the planet's most prominent climatologist, is even blunter: "The target that has been talked about in international negotiations for two degrees of warming is actually a prescription for long-term disaster." At the Copenhagen summit, a spokesman for small island nations warned that many would not survive a two-degree rise: "Some countries will flat-out disappear." When delegates from developing nations were warned that two degrees would represent a "suicide pact" for drought-stricken Africa, many of them started chanting, "One degree, one Africa."

Despite such well-founded misgivings, political realism bested scientific data, and the world settled on the two-degree target – indeed, it's fair to say that it's the only thing about climate change the world has settled on. All told, 167 countries responsible for more than 87 percent of the world's carbon emissions have signed on to the Copenhagen Accord, endorsing the two-degree target. Only a few dozen countries have rejected it, including Kuwait, Nicaragua and Venezuela. Even the United Arab Emirates, which makes most of its money exporting oil and gas, signed on. The official position of planet Earth at the moment is that we can't raise the temperature more than two degrees Celsius – it's become the bottomest of bottom lines. Two degrees.

1 writer